

Abstract

The purpose of this project is to designate roads, trails and areas for Off-highway Vehicles (OHV) use by class of OHV and time of year. The Mt. Hood National Forest (Forest) is proposing to designate and construct OHV routes on the Forest to provide motorized recreation opportunities. Also, the Forest proposes a Forest Plan Amendment to change the current management direction in the Mt. Hood Land and Resource Management Plan to comply with 36 CFR Parts 212, 251, 261, and 295 – Travel Management; Designated Routes and Areas for Motor Vehicle Use; Final Rule [Federal Register Vol. 70, No. 216 (2005)] (Final Travel Management Rule). Although the Final Travel Management Rule addresses all motor vehicle access and travel management, this project focuses on OHV use on the Forest. The Scope of the Project Section of Chapter 1 explains how the Forest is complying with all components of the Final Travel Management Rule.

The Mt. Hood National Forest OHV Management Plan strives to balance recreation opportunities for OHV use with other recreational uses of the National Forest and resource sustainability. The Final Travel Management Rule states that the US Forest Service “must strike an appropriate balance in managing all types of recreational activities. To this end, a designated system of roads, trails, and areas for motor vehicle use established with public involvement will enhance public enjoyment of National Forests while maintaining other important values and uses of NFS [National Forest Systems] lands” (page 68265).

Four alternatives were developed: Alternative 1 – No Action Alternative; Alternative 2 – Proposed Action; Alternative 3; and Alternative 4.

The No Action Alternative represents the current conditions. Based on direction in the Forest Plan, the implied policy on the Forest is “open unless posted closed.” Overall, this alternative allows OHV use on 2,463 miles of roads, 49 miles of motorized trails, and 394,886 acres of forestland. The Proposed Action (Alternative 2), Alternative 3 and Alternative 4 would change OHV access through much of the Forest by designated roads, trails and areas. The Proposed Action focuses on travel management within six locations, and allows OHV use on 124 miles of road and 97 miles of trail. Alternative 3 focuses on travel management within eight locations, and allows OHV use on 223 miles of roads and 102 miles of trails. Alternative 4 focuses on travel management within three locations, and allows OHV use on 59 miles of roads and 40 miles of trails. All of the action alternatives include a Forest Plan Amendment, which would limit OHV use to designated routes, prohibit cross-country travel, replace the enforcement tool to the Motor Vehicle Use Map (MVUM), and remove the requirement to post areas or roads as closed.

Implementing any of the action alternatives would comply with the Final Travel Management Rule. All the action alternatives provide motorized recreation opportunities across the Forest and balance this use with non-motorized recreation opportunities. After a decision is made, all cross-country OHV travel and associated resource damage would be eliminated.

The Preferred Alternatives for this project are Alternatives 3 and 4. These alternatives best respond to the public comments received during the scoping period.